New York
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1945

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THEATRE OPENINGS
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"The Assassin"

New York Post

OCTOBER 18, 1945

'The Assassin' Dramatizes The Shooting of Darlan

By Wilella Waldorf

Irwin Shaw has dramatized his impressions of the shooting of Adm. Darlan in "The Assassin," produced last night at the National Theatre, and since we are all still too close to the event to state with any certainty how much of the play is history and how much pure melodrama, the victim is cautiously referred to as Admiral Marcel Vesprey and high ranking French officers in Algiers at the time are fictional in character. The program, however, does not carry the customary note to the effect that any resemblance to real persons living or dead in purely coincidental.

"The Assassin" is taut, tingling melodrama well produced and well played. Considering that most of the characters are supposed to be French, it probably moves with too much dispatch and allows too few opportunities for the expansive qualities of the Latin temperament to display themselves.

But as an interpretation for home consumption of a confused and confusing period that has always seemed a hopeless muddle to most Americans, "The Assassin" has its points. Although we understand that Mr. Shaw's original script has undergone considerable cutting in the interest of speeding up the action and keeping the play from bogging down in too much talk, there is still some good talk in it and the author makes a valiant attempt to reduce the bewildering political contradictions of the time to a simple conception wherein men of good will are banded together in a brave attempt to found a new world on the ruins of the old.

It is Karl Malden as the head of a French underground unit in Algiers who enunciates Mr. Shaw's most stirring speech, and he does it well. But he is only one of a large company that plays effectively under Martin Gabel's alert direction, ever intent on getting over what the play has to say by keeping the audience on its toes waiting for the next move in a desperate game of double and triple cross.

It is impossible to mention all of the actors who aid materially in making "The Assassin" a theatrical evening of more than usual interest, but it happens that the title role is played by Frank Sundstrom, a Swedish leading man of experience and quality, making his American debut. Robert de Mauny, the Assassin, is supposed to be only twenty years old and Mr. Sundstrom appears a bit more than that, but he is a keen and ingratiating actor who speaks English well, though with a marked accent. His mother, according to a biographical note, is an American, but he was brought up abroad and has appeared extensively on the Swedish stage.

Boris Aronson's settings lend atmospnere and a sense of authenticity to a play that has every reason to anticipate a run on Broadway.

At its best, "The Assassin" strikes a keynote as true today as it was three years ago. Says Andre Vauquin, the moderate underground leader, who believes neither in the Monarchists nor the Communists as the saviors of France: "We live in a confused age and are saved by confused heroes."

'THE ASSASSIN.'

Play by Irwin Shaw; staging by Martin Gabel; settings designed by Boris Aronson; presented by Carly Wharton and Martin Gabel, in association with Alfred Bloomingdale, at the National Theater Wednesday evening, October 17, 1945. The cast:

Monsieur Popinot	William Hansen
Gustav Boubard	Alfred White
Lucien Gerard	Guy Sorel
Christine Theodore	Frances Chaney
Charles Gasterac	Ralph Stanley
Helene Mariotte	Lesley Woods
Sophie Vauquin	Elana Karam
Robert de Mauny	Frank Sundstrom
Victor Mallaste	Harold Huber
David Stein	Henry Sharp
Ida Stein	Carmen Mathews
Andre Vauquin	Karl Malden
Steingel	Peter Gregg
General Rouchbeau	Richard Keith
General Mousset	Clay Clement
General Klay	Robert Ober
Colonel Von Kohl	William Malten
Admiral Marcel Vespery	Roger de Koven
Haynes	Harrison Dowd
A Captain	Alan Dreeben
Lieutenant Crane	Stuart Nedd
Sergeant	Frank DeLangton
Monsieur Jacques	Booth Colman
A Woman	Florence Robinson
Guard	Alan Dreeben
Priest	William Marceau

Soldiers: Booth Colman, Ralph Smiley, Bill Weyse and William Marceau.

Journal American

OCTOBER 18, 1945

'The Assassin' Opens At National Theatre

By ROBERT GARLAND

If, like the soldier who sat in back of me last night at the National Theatre, you never heard tell of Adm. Jean Darlan, you're at liberty to cast history out into 41st st. and accept "The Assassin" as sere-and-mellow drama only. Frankly, I know none too much about the murdered Frenchman, either. But I do know that he was slain in December, 1942; that now, not three years later, he makes his reappearance as the Adm. Marcel Vespery of Irwin Shaw's new play.

This sere, this mellow-drama with overtones, undertones and monotones of social significance, is not entirely unaccustomed to the footlights' disarming glare. Last March, at their Savoy Theatre Londoners had a look at it. And they didn't seem to find it any more arresting than I found it last night across the street from where interurban buses come and go. "The Assassin" looks and sounds uncomfortably like "Shenandoah" in modern dress.

It shouldn't, though, for this is the American Mr. Shaw's seventh successive play. The others are "Bury the Dead," "Siege," "The Gentle People," "Quiet City," "Retreat from Pleasure" and "Sons and Soldiers." The intelligentsia can have "The Assassin," too.

* * *

A Darlan Play

For three acts and eight scenes, from a cafe in Algiers to a cell in an Algerian military jail, the plotting playwright and his plotting performers work their wordy way toward an assassination of which you already know. Unless, of course, you never heard tell of Adm. Jean Darlan. All Irwin Shaw's murderers and all Irwin Shaw's men can do little to lend drama to a denouement undramatically foredoomed. The Admiral is as good as dead at curtain rise.

He's as good as dead in French Army Headquarters in Algiers. He's as good as dead back in the Algerian cafe. He's as good as dead in a small villa just outside the town. He's as good as dead once more in the Algerian cafe. Then, over the radio, three—maybe four—soft shots are heard and Robert de Mauny, the assassin of the title, has at least caught up with history. Three days later, in that Algerian military jail, they come and get him.

They come and get Robert, just as you knew they would. He says farewell to his lady-friend. He writes his own epitaph upon the prison wall. And he goes out into the chill Algerian dawn, where riflemen are waiting. "It's a far, far better thing—"

Swell New Swede

At the National Theatre, across the street from where interurban buses come and go, you can almost hear him repeat those Dickensonian words as, like Sydney Carton of "The Only Way," he stalks forth to meet his predestined doom. Gilbert Miller's father, Henry, used to make the most of the situation before the century turned. Now, in 41st st. Frank Sundstrom, a likely looking importation from Sweden, pulls the trick again. Vive la France!

A populous surrounding cast acts widely, but not too well. Roger de Koven, an escapee from the School of Social Research, is a dead-pan Adm. Darlan—beg pardon, Adm. Vespery! And there's many a characterization by Harold Huber, Clay Clement, Guy Sorel, Karl Malden, William Hansen and other lost-in-the-program actors. I wish I could name them for you. But, reading from top to bottom and back to top again, there's no sure way of telling . . .

So it turns out that "the Assassin" is a would-be historical hair-raiser that raises nary a strand. Under the producing gonfalon of Carly Whaton, Martin Gabel and Alfred Bloomingdale, Irwin Shaw has once more not succeeded as a big Broadway best-seller.

The Sun

OCTOBER 18, 1945

'The Assassin,' Irwin Shaw's New Play, Given to Rambling and to Oratory.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

"The Assassin," Irwin Shaw's melodrama of the French resistance movement in North Africa, presented last evening at the National, is loose, talky and theatrical and it fails to sustain the excitement that it frequently creates. Carly Wharton and Martin Gabel make the presentation, in association with Alfred Bloomingdale.

There are several scenes in Shaw's play that are pungent and well done. Certainly one of them is that in which a wily French general persuasively submits the proposition for the assassination of Admiral Darlan—designated in the play as Admiral Marcel Vespery—to the heroic young Royalist who takes over the job. But it's playwriting that wanders off into oratory, and the final scene in the death cell, in which the condemned hero delivers his eulogy to the idealists of the world, isn't good theater or good melodrama, either.

The locale of "The Assassin" is Algiers, November of 1942. In three acts and eight scenes Playwright Shaw tells his story of the plotting, the treachery, the intrigue, the self-sacrifice and the heroism of the French of North Africa after the Allied invasion, and at the time of the murder of Darlan—and of the penalty that is paid by the idealistic young Robert de Mauny for his deed.

I saw this play last spring in London. The excellent production at the National is comparable to that of the London version. The acting here is quite as good and the precise direction of Martin Gabel, stressing excitement wherever possible, is better than that given the melodrama at the Savoy Theater in West End. But "The Assassin" is still too diffuse, its characters are still too hollow, and the play's tendency to go into speech-making is a definite handicap all the way.

There are enough players upon the stage of the National to put on "Qu' Vadis." Or even "Du Barry." The role of the self-sacrificing hero, who gives his life for France and for his comrades of the underground, falls to Frank Sundstrom, a tall, lithe, mannered Swedish actor making his debut on Broadway. He gives a singularly creditable performance in a role that is never quite believable. Harold Huber, as a wily, scheming, treacherous plain clothes man, is the best of the co-players.

There are good performances from Karl Malden, playing a resistance leader, and Clay Clement as the French general who bargains for the assassination of the Admiral and doesn't live up to it. Lesley Woods, from out of radio, is quite alive as the heroine and brings all the intensity of the networks to the part of the heroine.

"The Assassin" holds your interest frequently, but it is far from being a compact or satisfactory melodrama—and far from being Irwin Shaw at his best.

****

PM

OCTOBER 18, 1945

—Kronenberger—

A Thin Slice Of History

PM Reviews

In *The Assassin*, Irwin Shaw has set about rewriting a page of recent history. His play, concerned with the Free-French underground and the Vichy French Government in Algiers just before and just after the American invasion, centers finally in the assassination of Admiral Darlan (here called Admiral Vespery).

The subject, by now, has lost—in terms of world emotions as well as of world events—any acute timeliness; and in that sense Mr. Shaw has clearly lost the moment in time when *The Assassin* might have best prospered simply as stirring stage journalism. But, though this is to forfeit a distinct advantage, it is also to accept a far higher challenge—to look at historical events after they have begun to fall into perspective, and rather than merely record them in the agitated terms of the moment, to seek to express, explain, enlarge their meaning.

Mr. Shaw has not, however, really accepted that challenge. He has not given history any quality of dramatic literature, or even of dramatic legend. He has in the main contrived a piece of theater that, despite its obvious concern for what went on in North Africa, somehow achieves the effects, and even the cliches, of romantic melodrama. It is a thoroughly disappointing use of his material, and even on its own terms not too rewarding a use. A few of the scenes in *The Assassin* are quite effective, a number of others are passably interesting. But, judged merely as melodrama, *The Assassin* is not as a whole exciting enough.

* * *

Mr. Shaw's assassin is a young French royalist who stumbles upon a Free-French underground group, and for reasons of his own—one of them amorous—goes along with it. In the first days after the Americans take over, when Admiral Vespery is put at the head of the government, young De Mauny, along with the Free-French, is clapped into a concentration camp. He is hauled out of it by a general who is hostile to the Admiral, and has chosen De Mauny to assassinate him. De Mauny consents to, after the general assures him that a substitute will be led before the firing squad and after the general agrees first to release De Mauny's friends from the camp. De Mauny goes through with the killing; but afterwards no substitute is provided because power has changed hands; and rather than save his life by confessing who engineered the assassination, De Mauny goes forth to his death.

Mr. Shaw has quite properly contrived his own story and created his own hero, and there is no reason to measure them against their historical counterparts. But, simply as a character, Mr. Shaw's assassin is psychologically a rather dubious figure. Mr. Shaw offers certain plausible motivations along the way, but by the end of the evening de Mauny is hardly more than a familiar and conventional kind of romantic hero. There is even his love for a girl in the underground, which quite follows a tradition, even a rather corny tradition.

Mr. Shaw is more successful with some of his other people. The Free-French group—liberals, Communists, anti-Nazi refugees, etc.—have a representative quality, and their leader has a certain rough vigor. It is he who articulates a philosophy of leadership which the author seems to share—that men in a good resistance group may differ widely in their politics so long as they have "quality" as human beings. *The Assassin* has its quota of such speeches; one or two are fairly eloquent, but they belong to dramatic journalism rather than dramatic literature.

The Vichy French, spying on one another and conspiring to cross one another up, yield one or two interesting stage portraits also, but none of them rises to the level of flesh and blood.

* * *

That all this should come off as florid and often rather old-fashioned melodrama is not a matter of the incident and action only; it is also a matter of tone. Mr. Shaw somehow mars a good deal of expressive enough dialogue by giving it a rhetorical tinge that creates of itself a melodramatic atmosphere.

In staging the play, Mr. Gabel has followed the author's lead and given it the sharp, emphatic quality of melodrama. And the cast is generally a sound one. Frank Sundstrom, making his Broadway debut after a very successful career in his native Sweden, plays the title role well, with a marked and interesting personal style. Karl Malden is very good as the leader of the underground; Roger de Koven makes a good enough Admiral, and Clay Clement and Richard Keith an effective brace of Vichy generals. There are nice performances in smaller parts by Lesley Woods, Henry Sharp, Frances Chaney, Elena Karam, Harrison Dowd and others; and the Boris Aronson sets are good. *The Assassin* is a professional job and a sometimes interesting play; but it does not begin to do justice to its theme, or really come off as a piece of theater.

—Louis Kronenberger

"The Assassin"—*continued*

New York Herald Tribune

OCTOBER 18, 1945

By HOWARD BARNES

Misfires

IRWIN SHAW has written a semi-documentary melodrama in "The Assassin." His new play at the National sticks to facts with reasonable authority as it celebrates the killing of the wily French collaborationist Admiral Darlan, in 1942. Unfortunately, it takes an unconscionable time getting to the pay-off, and winds up with no more than a tiny distillation of dramatic meaning and feeling. Occasionally the writing and the acting make a scene flare up rather triumphantly. This does not keep the cadences of the acts from having a dying fall. Even a good blast of the "Marseillaise" could not have saved the climax from an inherent confusion of construction.

* * *

There is no possible question of the author's sincerity and sensitivity. He has singled out the events that led up to Darlan's assassination as the crux of the French defection to the cause of democracy. He has tried to show that patriots, no matter what their particular political beliefs, worked together against traitors in the darkest days of Vichy opportunism. What he has written is sometimes stirring and fundamentally disturbing, but the final soap-box speech of the heroic assassin, who warns his compatriots to be wary of the Germans within themselves, as he is led off to the firing squad, is more trite than trenchant.

* * *

For some obscure reason Darlan is known as Vespery in the script, although he is constantly referred to as the leader of the French fleet. A spade might just as well have been called a spade in so factual a record as "The Assassin." His fear of his colleagues in the French Army of North Africa, as the Americans were landing, is given delicate definition. So is his contempt of American naivete. The scheming of his staff which led to his extinction is a bit too lurid for comfort, but the plotting of freedom-loving Frenchmen to bring back dignity and honor to their country inspires passages of ringing eloquence. There is more than a little eloquence in this Shaw work, but it is smothered in a hodge-podge of ill-assorted scenes.

* * *

The acting follows the writing at every turn. Harold Huber is excellent as an agent of the Surete who sells his services to the highest bidder. Karl Malden contributes a powerful portrayal of the Free French leader in Algiers, and Lesley Woods and Frances Chaney are attractive and even touching as feminine members of his underground band. Frank Sundstrom, in the title role, leaves much to be desired. He is fine in the early scenes of violence, but his ultimate sacrifice for French freedom is neither convincing nor moving. Martin Gabel's staging makes the most of the best in "The Assassin." There is not enough of that to make the production noteworthy.

The New York Times

OCTOBER 18, 1945

'The Assassin,' Based on the Murder of Admiral Darlan, Has Its American Premiere Here at the National Theatre

By LEWIS NICHOLS

While serving in the Army, Irwin Shaw remembered he also was a playwright, and during his spare time managed to write "The Assassin." Based on the murder of Admiral Darlan and pleading the case for the freedom of France, the play arrived at the National last evening after first being shown to London. For his intention, that of telling a bit of recent history with its political and social ramifications, Mr. Shaw deserves full credit. Unhappily, the story cannot end with that period. "The Assassin" is not a good play. It is too often wordy, too often high-sounding without substance, it has too many waits and too little dramatic drive. The melodramatic phase of the murder runs into a sentimental love affair and that into a discussion of philosophy—and none of them fare well from the union.

* * *

The play opens as the American fleet is moving east through the Mediterranean; the first scene shows the underground in Algiers. The characters include Communists, workers, refugees, a monarchist, all with the single aim of destroying the Germans. When they have been driven out, "Admiral Marcel Vespery" is put in charge. An opportunist willing to sell to the highest offer, he has as subordinates other opportunists with ideas of their own. One of them persuades the young royalist to murder the Admiral as he makes a radio talk on Christmas Eve. The last scene shows the assassin about to face the firing squad, the rescue that had been promised him having failed.

On the political side, Mr. Shaw is saying that men of honesty, regardless of faith, eventually will reach the common good; that mistakes, such as the "Admiral," may happen, but they will be corrected. It is perhaps fair enough on a playwright's part to offer this through melodrama, but once he has started, Mr. Shaw should keep the local blood-pressure higher. "The Assassin" is fitful. There are long speeches relieved only by suddenly opened doors and the prowl of police, sent there, it often seems, just to end the talk. The love afafir is the weakest link of all. It isset down as a sort of lip service to tradition, and, as the author apparently doesn't care much about it either, it succeeds in ruining more scenes than it helps.

* * *

For the Royalist assassin, the producers are offering a local debut to Frank Sundstrom, a young Swedish actor. He has the bounce and swagger suggested by the part; he is better while stubbornly defying his colleagues and the enemy than he is grappling with the love affair. Roger de Koven is the Admiral and Clay Clemen tand Richard Keith are two of his subordinates. Mr. Clement has a nice leisurely cynicism as a member of the older generation of monarchists. Harold Huber is the policeman, offering that evil genius as though he were the devil returned; and Karl Malden is one of the Communist members of the underground. Martin Gabel, also coproducer, directed. There is a plentiful supply of realistic settings by Boris Aronson, the main one of a cafe and the final of a prison being extremely effective.

New York World-Telegram

OCTOBER 18, 1945

By Burton Rascoe

'Assassin' Is Limburger, How So It's Spread

There is no use in my wasting your time by going into any details about why "The Assassin," by Irwin Shaw, which opened at the National last night, is an especially asphyxiating piece of Limburger, for the show will probably be closed before the ink on this paper is dry. You may omit to read the rest of this piece.

The play has two merits in my eyes. It gives employment, for a brief period, to no less than 30 deserving actors, including Frank Sundstrom, loaned to Broadway (so the program informs me) by special arrangement with David O. Selznick.

If Mr. Sundstrom survives "The Assassin" Mr. Selznick is certainly going to have to give his publicity boys plenty of leeway on the budget to build him up as a knockout for the female trade. And Mr. Selznick brought him all the way from Sweden just for this trade!

New Directing Low.

In mitigation of the circumstances of Mr. Sundstrom's first American appearance in any role, it must be said that, in "The Assassin," he was under the thumb of a gentleman who gets the Rascoe prize as the worst director of any play of the last five seasons—Mr. Martin Gabel.

Mr. Gabel has, perhaps, permanently dented the reputations, in the minds of some who saw the show last night, of such excellent actors as Harold Huber (remember him in "A Farewell To Arms" and in a lot of movies?), Lesley Woods, Elena Karam, Peter Gregg and Karl Malden. Veterans such as Clay Clements, Roger De Koven, Guy Sorel and Robert Ober couldn't be permanently injured by Mr. Gabel's curious notions about how a play should be directed; and Alan Dreesen, who was overlooked by Mr. Gabel, scored a triumph simbly by sitting in a chair and uttering two lines.

An Assassin's Motives.

Mr. Shaw apparently first had a notion that a play of social significance could be made out of the suppositional motives of the young fanatic who murdered Admiral Darlan and out of the factional fights in France among the De Gaullistes, the Blumites, the Croix de Feu (of which De Gaulle was, at least at first, a hero), the Bourbons, the Bonapartistes and the Communists. He favored the De Gaullistes. But he began to have doubts about De Gaulle, while writing his play.

The essential, horror of the thing, however, add up to this: that Gavrillo Prinzep, who started World War I, by killing the Archduke Ferdinand; Czolgosh, who shot President McKinley; Giuseppe Zangara, who shot at Franklin D. Roosevelt and killed Mayor Cermak of Chicago; and all other assassins of rulers are in Mr Shaw's eyes heroes. . . . Mr. Shaw needs to do a bit more thinking—and not in terms of Hollywood melodramas, which require the services of 30 principals, 3000 extras in mob scenes, 40 sets, and cost over a million dollars to produce — for a piece of very ripe limburger.

DAILY NEWS

OCTOBER 18, 1945

Juvenile Writing Louses Up Plot Of I. Shaw's Meller, 'The Assassin'

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Irwin Shaw has tried to write a melodrama in "The Assassin" and Carly Wharton and Martin Gabel presented it last night at the National. Despite the appearance of two or three good players, including Sweden's Frank Sundstrom, the thing is in great want of Lauren Bacall (the Look), Humphrey Bogart (the Snarl), Sydney Greenstreet (the Belly) and Jack L. Warner (the Bankroll).

Mr. Shaw has attempted to contrive a "Casablanca" with political overtones. He has put together in Algiers a band of plotters ranging from Communists to a French Royalist and has involved them in the shooting dead of a French admiral named Vespery in the play but named Francois Darlan in history.

They gather in a bistro, these plotters, and they plot plenty; but they also talk a childish kind of cops-and-robbers language. Says some dame of the dashing young Royalist who is going to liquidate the admiral, "You sweet, silly boy." Says a bored French general who has been collaborating with the Germans and who has heard of our imminent landing in North Africa, "The Americans are very inconsiderate about their invasions. They invade at unfashionable hours."

Such stuff as this is bilgewater, of course, and so is a great deal of the rest of "The Assassin." Mr. Shaw's scenario sounds more like the balloons in a ten-cent comic book than it does, even, a movie.

Everything In It.

There is a great deal of double-dealing, spying, cynical talk, patriotic talk, political talk and a smattering of affection between the sexes, and in the end the Shavian Scarlet Pimpernel is led away to die a brave death before a rifle squad. A large cast works hard—but I couldn't work hard enough to keep up with them. I just got tired. And a little confused because Mr. Shaw doesn't identify all of his characters often enough by name so I can tell from the program who's playing them.

Mr. Sundstrom, however, is easily remembered, and he seems to be a very good leading man—tall, handsome, boyish, a little Boyerish and able to speak English quite clearly with a good voice. The program says he appears by courtesy of David O. Schmaltz or somebody, who, I presume, is a Hollywood movie producer and wants us theatregoers to damn well understand that Mr. Sundstrom is merely on loan to the stage and will be transported to the screen as soon as Mr. Schmoos or whatever his name is decides we have given him enough of a buildup.

Another player I could identify—and liked—is Harold Huber, who plays a sinister policeman.

Mr. Gabel directed. The sets are by Boris Aronson.

"The Red Mill"

PM Exclusive

OCTOBER 17, 1945

—Kronenberger—

Victor Herbert & Father Time

PM Reviews

It is 39 years since *The Red Mill* (starring Montgomery and Stone) first opened on Broadway; and very often, watching it revived last night, it seemed that long. Victor Herbert's talent is clashing now with Father Time; and *The Red Mill* displays, along with Herbert's often attractive tunes, a whole period style of operetta. The librettos and horseplay of two score years ago were not fashioned for posterity; and the scene did not have to be laid in Holland for the sets, the costumes, the dances to seem more than a little dutchy. Yet, by not trying too strenuously to improve on the operetta style of 1906, by preserving the past for whatever it is worth, *The Red Mill* has probably come off better than it would have had it seriously attempted to face-lift 1906 into 1945. This is at least what we mean by a revival. I can't conscientiously call it a full evening's entertainment; but I enjoyed the music, I laughed at Eddie Foy, Jr.'s, clowning, and, though I yawned here and there at the rest, I did not particularly suffer.

The plot is filled with all the romantic flourishes of 1906, and with the inenarrable complications of operetta plots of any period: innkeepers' daughters, burgomasters' daughters, dead-beat Americans, amorous French matrons with many daughters. All this nonsense permitted Victor Herbert to run the musical gamut from scampering ditties to schmaltzy duets. *The Red Mill* is not by a long shot Herbert's best score, but it is a pleasant one—doubly pleasant, perhaps, for being so much of it familiar. *Because You're You* is here, and *Every Day Is Ladies' Day With Me*, and *Isle of Our Dreams*, and *In Old New York*. Most of the songs are nicely enough sung — Edward Dew, I think, doing the best job with *Every Day Is Ladies' Day*.

* * *

The main comedy roles (of the cadging American cut-ups) that Montgomery and Stone once played have gone this time to Eddie Foy and Michael O'Shea. O'Shea is pleasant in a part that I suspect Keenan Wynn would have been capital at; but it is Foy who shares with Victor Herbert the credit for making something out of the evening. He needs a little policing at times, but his personality and bag of tricks, and the hats and whiskers he wears when playing Dr. Watson to O'Shea's Sherlock Holmes can make of him a very funny fellow. Odette Myrtil, as the French lady, is also something of a comedy personality, though she too suffers from over-exuberance.

There's plenty of dancing during the evening. Dorothy Stone, keeping the family franchise in the show, is still very light on her feet, and she and her husband, Charles Collins, do several ballroom-dancing turns. There is also some standard operetta prancing, and some rather simple-minded ballet. Ann Andre and Lorna Byron share with Miss Stone the three female romantic leads; the three male ones go to Mr. Dew, Mr. Collins and Robert Hughes. Plenty of romance, as you can see. The sets and costumes, I fear, are just about what they must have been in 1906. But there's no reason, right now, for insulting 1906; compared to what the Fall of 1945 has produced in a musical way, to a *Mr. Strauss Goes to Boston* or a *Polonaise*, *The Red Mill* can more than hold its head up. But it's still not too much of a show.

—Louis Kronenberger

"The Red Mill"

The Victor Herbert operetta revived last night at the Ziegfeld Theatre by Paula Stone and Hunt Stromberg, Jr. Original books and lyrics by Henry Blossom. Additional lyrics by Forman Brown. Stage direction by Billy Gilbert. Dances staged by Ada Broadbent. Scenic and lighting supervision by Adrian Awan. Conductor, Edward Ward.

THE CAST

Town Crier	Billy Griffith
William	Hal Price
Frank	George Meader
Tina	Dorothy Stone
Bill-Poster	Tom Halligan
Flora	Nana O'Brady
Lena	Lois Potter
Dora	Mardi Bayne
The Burgomaster	Frank Jaquet
A Sailor	Thomas Spengler
Juliana	Lorna Byron
Con Kidder	Michael O'Shea
Kid Conner	Eddie Foy, Jr.
Gretchen	Ann Andre
Hendrik Van Damm	Robert Hughes
Gaston	Charles Collins
Pennyfeather	Billy Griffith
Madame La Fleur	Odette Myrtil
Georgette	Phyllis Saleman
Lusette	Nony Franklin
Fleurette	Kathleen Ellis
Nanette	Jacqueline Ellis
Lucette	Patricia Gardner
Yvette	Joan Johnston
The Governor	Edward Dew

"The Red Mill"—*continued*

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

OCTOBER 17, 1945

By HOWARD BARNES

Victor Herbert's Music

IT would be pleasant to report that Victor Herbert's "The Red Mill" had been sadly neglected since it was first shown here some twoscore years ago. The current revival at the Ziegfeld demonstrates without much question that the operetta is full of song and has more than one moment of giggling comedy. Served as it is by performers who know the tricks of yesteryear, as well as the comeons of contemporary music dramas, it is a pleasant contrast to some of the drivel that has been dished out recently in the name of comic opera. For all of that, one may wonder at the present resurrection.

* * *

For the book and lyrics of the work, for all of the doctoring that may have been done on the original Henry Blossom libretto, evade satisfying stage presentation. The idea of having a couple of roving Americans turn a Dutch town topsyturvy with the aid of a haunted windmill, and their dauntless notions of romantic values, may have seemed a brilliant bit of spoofing in 1906, when the great team of Montgomery and Stone appeared in the piece. It still has its funny moments, particularly when Michael O'Shea and Eddie Foy jr. are playing the self-constituted cupids, or the latter and Odette Myrtil are executing a sort of travesty on an earlier era of make-believe. The point is that the story stops the music and the music is not quite good enough to stand up by itself.

* * *

Paula Stone and Hunt Stromberg jr., who are responsible for the production, have dressed it up with all the appurtenances of current operetta folderol. There are several fetching ballets, designed by Aida Broadbentt and danced with considerable enthusiasm by Charles Collins and the ensemble. There are such up-to-date allusions as being caught behind the eight ball to give an air of modernism to the proceedings. Fortunately, there is nothing strictly contemporary about the music. It is good, indeed, to hear "In Old New York," "I Want You to Marry Me," or "Because You're You," and wonder whether you might have seen the show before, even though the date of your birth would have made that quite impossible.

* * *

Dorothy Stone has the most difficult assignment in the show—that of Tina, who wants to marry a sailor instead of the governor her burgomaster father chose as her bridegroom. Unfortunately, she overacts and oversings the part throughout. Edward Dew, as the governor, is very good in the number, "Every Day Is Ladies' Day With Me," and O'Shea and Foy, as already noted, carry the occasional humorous matches in the script with remarkable efficiency. Billy Gilbert's staging is as fragmentary as the framework of the libretto. "The Red Mill" has several fine tunes. It is straight operetta. But it is not one which deserved special consideration on Broadway at this time.

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The New York Times

OCTOBER 17, 1945

'The Red Mill,' Revival of Victor Herbert's Operetta Opens at the Ziegfeld Theatre

By LEWIS NICHOLS

From the West Coast back to Old New York there came last evening a revival of "The Red Mill." No doubt it is a sour one indeed who could set down this morning the fact that, earnest and willing as the attempt is, the Ziegfeld's tribute to the past remains about that and not much more. Since 1906, when Victor Herbert tossed off his whole score for the hit parade of the day, the theatre has moved on. Perhaps it has not moved forward, but it has moved. "The Red Mill" now appears amiable but dated; it is slow rather than sprightly. And in the present revival, not all the Herbert music receives the treatment it might have from fully-alive historians.

* * *

Perhaps this generation, which does not deserve a great deal, is lucky to receive any revival of "The Red Mill" whatsoever; for that, credit the Stepping Stones. Paula Stone, in association with Hunt Stromberg, is the producer. Dorothy, along with her husband, Charles Collins, are in the company. Fred, who with Dave Montgomery, was in the original production, sat last evening in the third row. What the children did and the Old Man saw was a singularly honest attempt to keep "The Red Mill" more or less as it was, to avoid many makeshift modernizations, to treat the work as something less than a football. As such, it has interest, and as such it has a certain lavander and old-lace charm, but the chances are those are not quite enough.

As may have been true in the past, with all due apologies to Mr. Stone, the music still is the best feature of "The Red Mill." Its story of a couple of Americans in Holland is so weird it might be a musical comedy book of 1945. Not so the music. "The Red Mill" is the opera which includes among others "In Old New York," "Isle of Our Dreams," "Every Day Is Ladies Day With Me," "Because You're You." Unfortunately, not all of the singers are up to the music; the soloists, with few exceptions, keep the words pretty much to themselves. Ann Andre, as Gretchen, is attractive enough but isn't a great singer; neither Lorna Byron nor Miss Stone, herself, can give full value. The choruses are better sung than the solos.

"The Red Mill" does have a good comedian in Eddie Foy Jr. Like Groucho Marx, he is all over the place, in false beard, false hair and a dead pan. His straight man is Michael O'Shea, and, without looking down their noses at the material supplied, the two manage to be pretty funny. Others in the cast are Odette Myrtil, Billy Griffith, George Meader, Edward Dew—a good voice, this last—and Frank Jaquet. Billy Gilbert directed so as to keep both the period mood and allow Mr. Foy headroom, and Aida Broadbent staged the simple dances. As it stands, the revival of "The Red Mill" provides a much better evening than the late "Mr. Strauss Goes To Boston" and others, but it is still not a full measure.

The Sun

OCTOBER 17, 1945

'The Red Mill' Is an Agreeable Surprise—Herbert's '06 Tunes Still Hits.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

In 1906, when the star-laden New York theater was the theater of Drew and Warfield, of Rose Stahl and Fritzi Scheff, the musical comedy called "The Red Mill" came into the revered Knickerbocker. Now lower the lights for a time elapse of thirty-nine years. The old Montgomery & Stone show is back again, opening tremulously last night at the Ziegfeld.

It is an agreeable surprise. The Victor Herbert music is delightful. Eddie Foy Jr. is outstanding in a company that is no more than passable. There is some painful comedy in Henry Blossom's book, subjected to modernization touches here and there, but there are no long and dull stretches and the Paula Stone-Hunt Stromberg Jr. production comes as quite a relief after some doleful musical pieces of recent memory.

In 1906 "The Red Mill" was a hit. In 1945, as a pleasant and unpretentious show, it is indeed all right for a fill-in until "Show Boat" arrives in Sixth avenue.

The evening's honors are Victor Herbert's. Such numbers as "In Old New York" and "Every Day Is Ladies' Day With Me" are as tuneful as ever. You also get "Isle of Our Dreams" and "I Want You to Marry Me" in one of Herbert's best scores. And, upon hearing these songs, it's quite easy to imagine the tumult they must have brought on when done originally at the old Knickerbocker, sixteen blocks to the south.

Eddie Foy Jr., in the role of Kid Conner, created by Dave Montgomery, is droll, likable and acrobatic and his is a performance that causes me to wonder if he hasn't been shockingly neglected by the producers of Broadway's musical plays.

Michael O'Shea does well enough as Con Kidder, Fred Stone's old part. Dorothy Stone is pleasant as Tina and is an attractive dancer, as is Charles Collins. Odette Myrtil (with violin) is as energetic as ever as the overpowering Madame La Fleur. Ann Andre is the burgomaster's pretty daughter who gets herself locked in the old red mill to prevent her marriage to the man she loves. Edward Dew is an excellent Governor and sings "Every Day Is Ladies' Day With Me" quite as jauntily as Neal McCay must have sung it in 1906.

Not a particularly exciting company, but somehow these people seem to know how to go about playing a piece of such antiquity. Not a sensational production, but neither is it shoddy. Despite its feeble comedy at times, "The Red Mill" comes forth as a generally pleasant show and one with a lot of quaint charm. And its old songs are wonderful.

Bring on "Florodora" and "The Belle of New York."

New York Post

OCTOBER 17, 1945

'The Red Mill' Returns—Amusing and Melodious

By Wilella Waldorf

Dave Montgomery and Fred Stone were the stars of Victor Herbert's "The Red Mill" when it was a hit on Broadway in 1906. Last night at the Ziegfeld Theatre Fred's daughter Paula and her partner, Hunt Stromberg Jr. revived the tuneful old show with Eddie Foy Jr. and Michael O'Shea in the comedy roles and another of Fred's daughters, Dorothy, as Tina, the innkeeper's dancing daughter. We shouldn't be surprised if it became a hit all over again, for the Victor Herbert melodies are still very pleasant to listen to, and the comedy of Eddie Foy Jr. has a Mad Hatter quality about it that is persistently ingratiating, even when his gags become a trifle limp.

Considering the fact that it has recently served up such lamentable tripe as "Mr. Strauss Goes to Boston" and "Polonaise," Broadway is in no position to pooh-pooh the venerable book and lyrics of Henry Blossom. As a matter of fact, both have undoubtedly been tinkered with here and there for the present production, but there has been no determined effort to modernize the play and one of its greatest charms is its old-fashioned atmosphere and style.

Victor Herbert, of course, was a composer who thought nothing of turning out nine or ten song hits for a single show, and "The Red Mill" sways from one hauntingly familiar number to another —"Whistle It," "Isle of Our Dreams," "In Old New York," "When You're Pretty and the World Is Fair," "Moonbeams," "Every Day Is Ladies' Day With Me," "I Want You to Marry Me," "Because You're You," and the rest.

Some of the voices are not too brilliant and the musical presentation in general is sometimes a bit tentative, but there's a cheerful disarming quality about the production that is very engaging. Nobody takes the goings-on too seriously, but there is no attempt at travesty, merely a carefree gaiety that is contagious—and all too rare around Broadway these evenings.

Bearing in mind that this is 1945, the producers have seen to it that there is a certain amount of ballet during the performance, but not too much of it, and there is plenty of good old fashioned chorus stepping plus a couple of snappy twirling numbers by Dorothy Stone and her husband, Charles Collins, that we found a relief after all the Battle Ballets and solemn toe work we've been getting of late.

It's the comedy, though, that really puts over "The Red Mill" again just as it was the comedy that made it a hit in 1906. Eddie Foy, Jr. is a clown merry enough to coax the most determined grouch into a good humor. His partner, Michael O'Shea, has an engaging manner and is often pretty funny on his own account, while who should turn up to assist in the revelry but Odette Myrtil. She's been carrying on of late on the West Coast and now returns, with her French and her violin, and a vigorous comedy technique to help bring out the laughs.

"The Red Mill" is here for a "limited" engagement, meaning that it may occupy the Ziegfeld Theatre only until the middle of December or thereabouts, before taking to the road. It should do well.

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New York World-Telegram

OCTOBER 17, 1945

By Burton Rascoe

It's a Gyp! Red Mill Only Runs Eight Weeks

You are the public and you are the judges. So I wish to prefer charges against Paula Stone and Hunt Stromberg Jr., producers of the revived version of "The Red Mill," which opened at the Ziegfeld last night. I charge them with being young meanies. They have limited the engagement to eight weeks. It should run as long as "Oklahoma!" I am going to picket the Ziegfeld with a placard saying "An eight-week engagement of this show is unfair to playgoers who have a right to see it! I demand a year's run!"

As a kid I saw "The Red Mill," with Montgomery and Stone in it, when it was on tour, about three years after it had chalked up a musical comedy record (for those days) of 274 performances in New York, beginning Sept. 24, 1906. I thought it was marvelous then. I would be in the tradition of those who like to tell their juniors that shows today aren't what they used to be if I said the revival wasn't as good as the original. But I would be an awful liar. It is immensely, insuperably better.

A Fine Production.

In the first place Miss Stone and Mr. Stromberg have given the show a production the like of which would have stricken the late Charles Dillingham, original producer of the musical (who liked to cut his corners closely and watched his pennies), with a nervous breakdown. He would (I think) have said that the very idea of spending so much money on a couple of clowns in a music show was downright anarchic, immoral and contrary to good business practice.

Eddie Foy Jr. Is Tops.

But Miss Stone and Mr. Stromberg have spent the money to excellent purpose. They have assembled a wonderful cast. They have got Edward Ward for musical director, and the man certainly knows how to evoke from his men the proper lilt and finesse of the Victor Herbert music (much of which is already familiar to you), and, by the way, he has a man at the drums, tympani, glockenspiel and chimes who is absolutely tops. Herbert knew how to make music soothing sensuous, exhilarating and voluptuous, and Mr. Ward and his boys know how to play it.

For the old Dave Montgomery role the young producers have had the extraordinary sense to engage Eddie Foy Jr. Here, I beg leave to say, is one of the great comedians of our time, much better than his father was (although his father was very, very good), and the only man living to dispute Bobby Clark's position as the ace zany of the period. (Where have they been keeping him? I saw him some months ago, in a brief bit, as his father in the movie "Yankee Doodle Dandy," and that bit, so perfect was it, is the only thing I can remember about the film, which was supposed to be a biography, wasn't it? of George M. Cohan.)

You should see, if you can, Eddie Junior perform. He has everything. He has limitless and effortless grace; he can tap, soft-shoe and make monkeys out of a lot of lauded ballet dancers; he can say "How do you do" in a way that makes me convulse with laughter, and he has some pantomimic stunts that are among the funniest things I ever saw on the stage—one of them being wherein he describes a gadget he has invented. The explanation of the gadget affects every part of his body—his eyes, ears, nose, arms and epigastrium. He is whipped when the burgomaster asks him what the gadget is for.

I could devote columns to Eddie Foy Jr. and to the hilarity he provokes and the means he uses in provoking it; but I must get on to saying that "The Red Mill" is a beautiful, melodious and utterly hilarious musical comedy, which I hope Broadway producers will study carefully; for it has charm, body, mirth and melody in such measure as has been lacking in nine out of 10 of our musical shows for years.

Nice Singing, Dancing.

Aida Broadbent has designed dances that will thrill the hearts of those who, like myself, like the ballet but do not adore to see it try to dominate musical comedy. There are two numbers, "The Dancing Lesson" and "Al Fresco," danced by Dorothy Stone and Charles Collins, which are of unearthly loveliness. The hit tunes are so familiar they need not be recalled, except to say they are sung by Dorothy Stone, Michael O'Shea, Odette Myrtil, Robert Hughes, Charles Collins, Lorna Byron, Ann Andre and Edward Dew, with gayety and aplomb.

Toward the end Mr. Foy steps to the footlights and tells the audience, "That's the plot." Something has been said about the legend of the Red Mill but nobody has taken it in—so Mr. Foy hopes—and that's his way of saying you don't have to know what "The Red Mill" is about. It is fun and music, color and excitement.

Billy Gilbert, the beloved sneeze man of the movies, has directed this show and he has done a superb job of it. The scenery and lighting are by Adrian Awan of the San Francisco and Los Angeles Light Opera associations. After "Song of Norway" and "The Red Mill" I am ready to take back almost everything I have ever said against theatrical emanations from the West Coast. "The Red Mill" is something to be treasured in memory.

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